Types of Knives: Kitchen, Pocket, Combat & Japanese Blades

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Noblie Custom Knives/Knife Blog/Types of Knives

Every one of the different types of knives —whether we're talking kitchen knives, outdoor blades, survival tools, or just the usual types folks keep around—has its own thing going on. It's own job, sure, but also a bit of personality too, if you ask me. Figuring out how a knife actually comes together—stuff like the blade style, the weight, how the handle sits in your palm—makes a big difference in how much you *get* what it's really made for. Some people are drawn to those custom knives that kinda feel like mini works of art, while others just want a solid, tough-as-nails knife they can trust for the day-to-day. Either way, there's probably one out there that just feels right when you hold it.

Classification Framework

Few topics stir more debate in blade circles than how, exactly, to classify a knife. S ome collectors sort by country of origin, others by era, still others by blade grind. F or practical use, however, three concentric lenses—**construction**, **deployme nt**, and **locking method**—cover nearly every modern design while mapping n eatly onto user intent.

Knife Type / Category	Examples / Sub-Types	Main Features	Common Uses / Applications
Fixed Blade Knives	Survival knives, combat knives, hunting knives, bushcraft knives	Blade is permanently fixed to the handle; stronger and more reliable than folding designs	Heavy-duty tasks, survival, self-defense, military, camping, field dressing
Folding Knives	Pocket knives, lockback knives, liner lock, frame lock	Blade folds into the handle; compact and safe to carry; includes various locking mechanisms	Everyday carry (EDC), light utility, travel, personal use
Automatic Knives	Switchblades, push-button knives	Blade deploys automatically with the press of a button or switch	Quick one-handed deployment; self-defense, military/law enforcement, collectors
Out-the-Front (OTF) Knives	Double-action OTF, single-action OTF	Blade ejects straight out the front of the handle; often spring-loaded	Tactical use, self-defense, fast deployment situations
Balisong / Butterfly Knives	Classic balisongs, trainer balisongs	Two handles that rotate around the tang; compact, can be manipulated for tricks	Martial arts, flipping tricks, utility use, collecting
EDC (Everyday Carry) Knives	Small folding knives, neck knives, slip joint knives	Portable and discreet; lightweight, easy to carry	Opening packages, daily cutting tasks, self-reliance, multitasking
Multi-Tool Knives	Swiss Army knives, Leatherman tools	Include blades plus additional tools (scissors, screwdrivers, can openers)	Everyday tasks, travel, camping, general preparedness
Kitchen Knives	Chef's knife, paring knife, bread knife, boning knife, cleaver, carving knife	Designed for food preparation; various shapes and sizes for specific culinary tasks	Cooking, chopping, slicing, filleting, boning, carving meat and vegetables
Japanese Kitchen Knives	Santoku, Nakiri, Gyuto, Deba, Yanagiba	Known for precision, lightweight feel, and fine sharpness	Professional and home cooking; slicing fish, vegetables, meats with precision
Outdoor / Survival Knives	Camp knives, bushcraft knives, tactical survival knives, firestarter knives	Heavy-duty build; may include sawback spines, hollow handles, or multitool features	Shelter building, fire-starting, hunting, emergency situations, survival training
Hunting Knives	Skinning knife, gut hook, caping knife, drop point, boning knife	Optimized for processing game animals; ergonomic and sharp with specialized shapes	Field dressing, skinning, gutting, and preparing game meat
Tactical / Combat Knives	Karambit, boot knife, bayonet, push dagger, military fixed blades	Built for combat or self-defense; ergonomic grip, non-reflective finish, fast deployment	Military, law enforcement, personal defense, rescue operations
Neck Knives	Mini fixed blades worn with a sheath around the neck	Compact, lightweight, quick access from neck sheath	Self-defense, EDC, backup blade, hiking
Dive Knives	Blunt tip, pointed tip, line cutter dive knives	Corrosion-resistant; often includes straps for leg or arm mounting	Scuba diving, cutting nets or lines, emergency underwater use
Throwing Knives	Balanced throwing knives, sport throwing knives	Balanced for flight; usually symmetrical and unsharpened edges	Recreational throwing, martial arts, target sports
Fantasy / Collectible Knives	Decorative daggers, custom art knives, movie replicas	Designed for aesthetics, often handmade or themed	Collecting, display, gifts, cosplay, fan items
Utility / Work Knives	Box cutters, carpet knives, safety knives	Replaceable blades, safe handling features	Construction, warehouse work, packaging, retail jobs

Fixed-Blade vs Folding Construction

•**Fixed blades**—a single piece of steel (usually full-tang) married to handle scales—rank first for strength. With no movingfixed blades parts, they shrug off prying, batoning, and freezing mud that would cripple a hinge. Outdoors professionals, hunters, and chefs alike choose when reliability over rides pocketability.

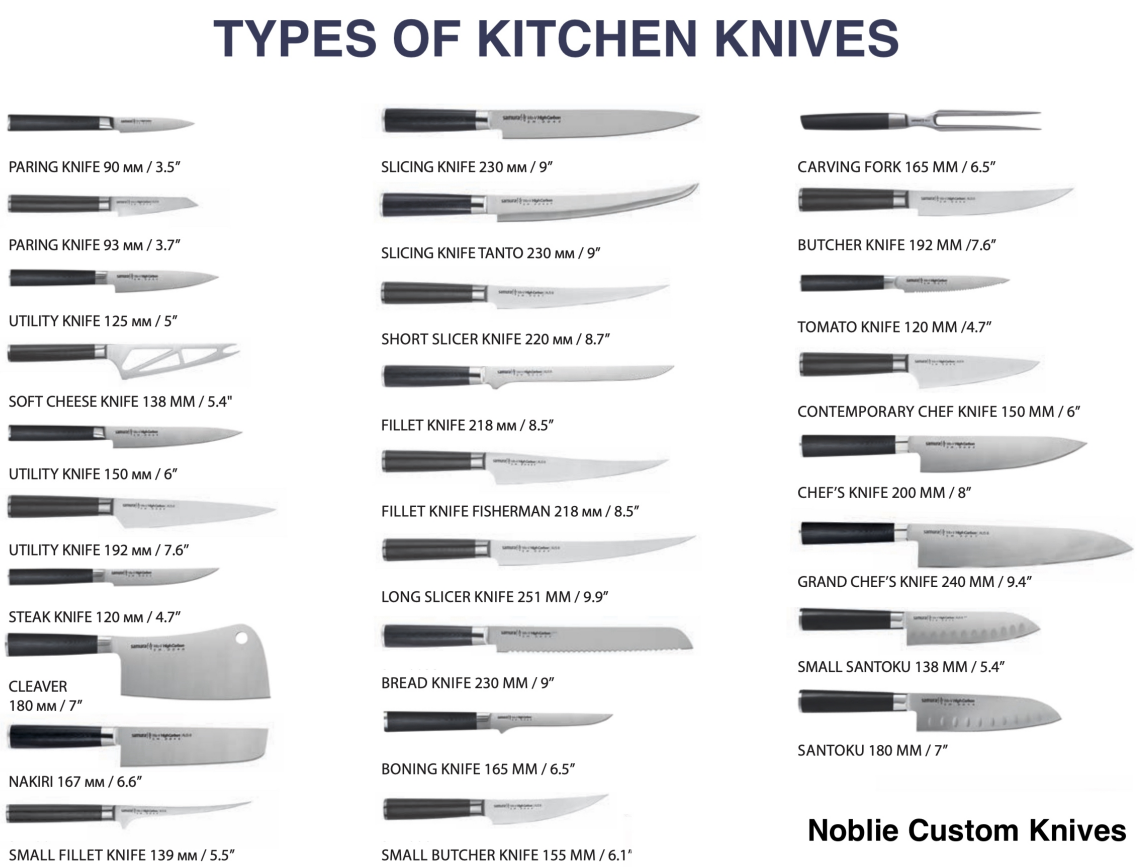
•**Folding knives** hinge the blade into the handle for safe, compact carry. The tr ade-off is a mechanical joint that can loosen or collect grit, so manufacturers com pensate with hardened pivots, phosphor-bronze washers, and over-travel stops. U rban users and tradespeople favour folders because size restrictions, legal limits, or daily convenience make belt sheaths impractical.

Primary Knife Categories

Knives earn their keep by what they cut and where they are carried. While model s often blur lines—an ultralight chef's knife can moonlight at a campsite—six bro ad categories dominate both commerce and conversation. Knowing these groups helps buyers zero-in on steel, length, and ergonomics that genuinely fit the job.

Types Of Kitchen Knives

Home cooks and restaurant brigades reach for different blades throughout a shift , yet most work is handled by five core styles. Master these and 90 percent of kit chen cutting becomes faster, safer, and more consistent.


TYPES OF KITCHEN KNIVES
PARING KNIFE 90 MM / 3.5"
PARING KNIFE 93 MM / 3.7"
UTILITY KNIFE 125 MM / 5"
SOFT CHEESE KNIFE 138 MM / 5.4"
UTILITY KNIFE 150 MM / 6"
UTILITY KNIFE 192 MM / 7.6"
STEAK KNIFE 120 MM / 4.7"
CLEAVER 180 MM / 7"
NAKIRI 167 MM / 6.6"
SMALL FILLET KNIFE 139 MM / 5.5"
SLICING KNIFE 230 MM / 9"
SLICING KNIFE TANTO 230 MM / 9"
SHORT SLICER KNIFE 220 MM / 8.7"
FILLET KNIFE 218 MM / 8.5"
FILLET KNIFE FISHERMAN 218 MM / 8.5"
LONG SLICER KNIFE 251 MM / 9.9"
BREAD KNIFE 230 MM / 9"
BONING KNIFE 165 MM / 6.5"
SMALL BUTCHER KNIFE 155 MM / 6.1"
CARVING FORK 165 MM / 6.5"
BUTCHER KNIFE 192 MM /7.6"
TOMATO KNIFE 120 MM /4.7"
CONTEMPORARY CHEF KNIFE 150 MM / 6"
CHEF'S KNIFE 200 MM / 8"
GRAND CHEF'S KNIFE 240 MM / 9.4"
SMALL SANTOKU 138 MM / 5.4"
SANTOKU 180 MM / 7"
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Kitchen Knife Type	Description	Common Uses
Chef's Knife	Versatile, broad-bladed knife with a curved edge for rocking motions	Chopping, slicing, dicing vegetables, herbs, and meats
Paring Knife	Small, short-bladed knife designed for precision tasks	Peeling, trimming, and detailed fruit or vegetable work
Bread Knife	Long serrated blade that cuts through crusty bread without crushing it	Slicing bread, cakes, and other soft or airy items
Utility Knife	Mid-sized knife that bridges the gap between a paring and chef's knife	Slicing fruits, vegetables, sandwiches, and small meats
Boning Knife	Narrow, flexible blade ideal for working around bones	Removing bones from meat, poultry, and fish
Peeling Knife	Short, curved blade for easy peeling and turning of fruits and vegetables	Peeling round produce like apples or potatoes
Cleaver Knife	Large, heavy rectangular blade designed for brute force chopping	Breaking down meat, cutting through bones, chopping tough vegetables
Fillet Knife	Thin, flexible blade designed to glide along the bones of fish	Filleting and skinning fish with precision
Carving Knife	Long, narrow blade that produces clean slices of meat	Carving roast, turkey, ham, and large cuts of cooked meat

Types Of Japanese Knives

Have you ever watched a sushi chef carve fish into wafer-thin slices, the knife gliding so smoothly it feels like an extension of their arm?
That’s the art of traditional Japanese knives at work. Forged from premium high-carbon or Blue
#2 steel, each blade is hammered, folded, and polished to achieve a hair-splitting edge that stays sharp through endless juliennes, minces, and fillets. You’ve got y our all-rounder Gyuto—with its curved belly perfect for that smooth rocking cut—and the Santoku, the “three-
virtue” knife celebrated for balancing meat, fish, and veggies in one swoop. Then there are the single-bevel specialists: the long, elegant Yanagiba for sashimi, the sturdy Deba for fish butchery, and the paper-thin Usuba for precise vegetable wo rk. Pick one up and you’ll notice the lightweight wa-handle—often octagonal or D -shaped—sitting comfortably in your palm, giving you finesse where Western bla des depend on heft. Here’s a tip I learned: after each use, rinse and gently dry th e blade, then oil it lightly before sheathing in its saya. Do this, and that legendary e dge will reward you with effortless, whisper-quiet cuts for years to come.

Additional reading: How to hold a Japanese knife.

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Japanese Knife	Description	Common Uses
Santoku	A general-purpose knife with a shorter, wider blade and a sheepsfoot tip	Slicing, dicing, and chopping vegetables, meat, and fish
Nakiri	A straight-edged knife with a rectangular blade designed for precise vegetable cuts	Chopping and slicing vegetables with clean, straight cuts
Gyuto	Japanese equivalent of a Western chef's knife with a thinner, sharper blade	Versatile knife for meat, fish, and vegetables; ideal for precision slicing

Specialized Types Of Cooking Knives

Specialized kitchen knives turn precise chores into effortless motions: a serrated tomato knife glides through delicate skins without crushing ripe flesh, while a cheese knife's forked tip and cut-out blade keep soft cheeses from clinging. Oyster knives combine a stout, blunt point with a protective thumb guard for safe shucking, and a mezzaluna's curved blade lets you rock herbs and garlic into uniform mince in seconds. Even non-cutting tools like palette knives and dough scrapers bridge the gap between blade and spatula, smoothing frostings or lifting sticky dough with surgical ease—each one designed to solve a single culinary puzzle with unrivaled finesse.

Specialized Kitchen Knife	Description	Common Uses
Decorating Knife	A small knife with a zigzag or curved blade for creating decorative cuts	Making garnishes, carving fruits and vegetables for presentation
Cheese Knife	Features holes in the blade to prevent soft cheese from sticking	Cutting soft, semi-soft, and hard cheeses cleanly
Tomato Knife	Serrated edge for slicing through tomato skin without crushing	Cutting tomatoes and other soft-skinned fruits or vegetables
Steak Knife	Serrated or straight-edged knife used at the table	Cutting cooked meats like steak or pork chops during meals
Butter Knife	Blunt-edged knife with a rounded tip	Spreading butter, jams, soft cheeses on bread or crackers
Butcher Knife	Heavy, wide-bladed knife for breaking down large cuts of meat	Slaughtering, sectioning, and trimming raw meat
Mincing Knife	Usually curved and rocked back and forth with both hands	Chopping herbs, garlic, and vegetables into very fine pieces
Oyster Knife	Short, thick blade designed for prying open oyster shells	Shucking oysters safely and cleanly

Continue reading: Types of Knives.